

Outstanding Employee, Director or Manager of the Year – Non-Profit Organization

Recognizes an individual making a significant impact within a non-profit.

Rick Christian (Sawyer County Fair)

Rick has a small board that organizes the complete 4-day fair activities and agriculture education. He is ideal for this award because of his tenacity for moving efforts forward, maintaining the fairgrounds year-round, and for respecting the past while keeping the fair sustainable. The fair celebrated 118 years in 2025. It is leaders, like Rick, that will keep it going for 118 and more years to come.

Wenona "Joey" Johnson (Senior Resource Center, Inc.)

The Senior Resource Center is affiliated with the Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources (GWAAR), one of three regional agencies on aging in Wisconsin that administer federal and state resources for the development of programs and services for older adults. Their mission is to affect positive change in the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of county and tribal aging units in order to preserve and enhance the quality of life of older adults in Northern Wisconsin. The programs of the Senior Resource Center are designed to achieve this mission. Nutrition through our congregate lunch service and Meals on Wheels Programs. Exercise classes to keep the body strong and moving – Super Seniors and other fitness classes and workshops. Social programs – bingo, cards and dominoes as well as programs and other special interests. Or just a nice place to meet with friends and enjoy a good cup of coffee. The Hayward location also has a handicapped accessible bus that travels within a 5-mile radius of the downtown area and for a small fee transports people to the Center as well as to shopping and medical stops.

Wenonah "Joey" Johnson, Executive Director, of the Senior Resource Center is our nominee for outstanding employee for a not-for-profit organization. She has worked with our organization since 2014 when the Senior Resource Center, Inc. called on Joey to join their Board of Directors. In 2017 the Board of Directors found themselves in need of an Executive Director. At that time Joey Johnson and Signe Lawson Jones (Board Member) volunteered to manage the Center until an Executive Director could be found.

After 2 years volunteering, Joey took herself out of retirement and stepped up to manage the Center full time. She is tireless. Meeting every challenge head on. The challenge of providing meals on wheels. Providing resources to help the elderly with questions. Where do we go for vaccines, shopping for food, socialization and online services, etc.

Heather Vabalaitis (Ventures Unique Boutique Thrift Shop)

Heather left the corporate world to take the position at Ventures on Main St Hayward. Since her employment at Ventures, she has helped them grow to needing a bigger building and location. Heather helped with the move, the layout and everything to do with them tripling the size of showroom. She is always willing to help with donations and sales. Besides her work here is also runs and helps with Christmas for kids. She is always helping Veterans as well.